



MARIO PUZO

The Godfather

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Introduction

'My father made him an offer he couldn't refuse. Luca held a gun to his head and my father told him that if he didn't agree to let Johnny go, Luca would blow his brains out.'

So Michael, youngest son of Don Vito Corleone, introduces his girlfriend Kay to his father's business practice. His father is a gangster, a very important gangster. He is the Godfather of one of the most powerful and richest families in New York. His business is fear and murder. Michael, an innocent college boy, doesn't want anything to do with his father. He's different from the others in his family. All he wants is a quiet, peaceful, honest life with Kay. But this isn't as easy as he thinks. Things happen, and Michael begins to change. He slowly realizes that, at heart, he's a Corleone too. And, if he must, he can be as deadly as the rest . . .

Mario Puzo was born in New York in 1920. He has written many books but *The Godfather*, which he wrote in 1969, is his most famous. In 1972, it was made into a film by Francis Ford Coppola. Marlon Brando won an Oscar for his performance as Don Vito Corleone. Coppola and Puzo won an Oscar for the best writing of a film. Coppola, born in 1939, was one of Hollywood's most important film-makers in the 1970s. As well as *The Godfather* and *The Godfather 2* (1974), he made *Apocalypse Now* (1979), also starring Marlon Brando.

His films during the 1980s were not so popular but, more recently, he has made two successful films: *The Godfather 3* (1990) and *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992).

Mario Puzo has written several films as well as books. His best-known films are *Superman* (1978) and *Superman 2* (1980).

Chapter 1 Wedding on Long Island

On the last Saturday in August, 1945, Miss Constanzia Corleone, daughter of Don Vito Corleone, married Carlo Rizzi. Her father had invited hundreds of people to the wedding at his huge house on Long Island, just outside New York. As the guests arrived, Don Corleone welcomed them all, rich and poor, with an equal show of love. Many of the guests had reason to be grateful to Don Corleone for their good luck in life, and they called him 'Godfather'* to his face.

Standing next to him as he welcomed the guests were two of his three sons, Santino - or Sonny, as he was called — was the eldest. He was a tall, strong, good-looking man with thick brown hair. He looked uncomfortable in his white shirt and black suit. The second son, Fredo, was completely different. He was weak-looking and pale, with sad dark eyes and thin lips.

The youngest son, Michael, was sitting at a table in the corner of the garden with his girlfriend, Kay. There was a gentle, innocent quality to him, with his soft dark eyes and full lips, but his army uniform suggested that this was not a weak man. Just a quiet one. He was embarrassed by all the singing and dancing, but he was quietly pleased that Kay was enjoying herself. This was the first time that she had met his family.

'Who's that funny little fat man over there?' she asked, her eyes shining with excitement. 'He looks about sixty years old but he's dancing like a teenager.'

'That's Pete Clemenza,' Michael said. 'He's an old friend of my father's.'

* Godfather: the head of an important family in the Mafia, which is a secret group of criminals. It is used here as a title of great respect.

'And what about him?' Kay looked at a large, ugly man who was sitting alone outside the house, talking to himself. 'He's very frightening.'

'That's Luca Brasi,' Michael smiled at Kay. 'He's waiting to speak to my father in private.'

'Yes, but who is he?'

'He helps my father sometimes,' Michael replied quietly, looking at his food.

Suddenly, the big man stood up and Kay looked away quickly, afraid that he was coming over to talk to her. But another man came up to the table instead. He had thin fair hair and blue eyes. Michael stood up and the two men hugged each other warmly.

'My brother, Tom Hagen, this is Kay Adams,' Michael finally said.

Tom Hagen shook Kay's hand, then whispered to Michael: 'My father wants to know why you don't go to see him.'

Michael sat down without speaking, and Tom walked away into the house, followed by Luca Brasi.

'If he's your brother, why does he have a different name?' Kay asked Michael when Tom had gone.

'When my brother Sonny was a boy,' Michael explained, 'he found Tom Hagen in the street. Tom had no home, so my father took him in and he's been with us ever since. He's a good lawyer. Not a Sicilian, but I think he's going to be a *Consigliori*!'

'What's that?'

'My father's chief adviser. Very important to the family.'

Suddenly, there came a loud, happy sound from the other side of the garden. The music and singing stopped. Connie, in her white wedding-dress, left her husband and ran towards the gate screaming: 'Johnny! Johnny!' She threw herself into the arms of a very handsome dark-haired man in a white suit, and covered his face with kisses. Then she led him by the hand through a crowd of excited, screaming girls, to meet her new husband, Carlo.

Kay turned to Michael excitedly. 'You didn't tell me your family knew Johnny Fontane,' she said.

'Sure. Do you want to meet him?' Michael smiled. 'My father helped him to become famous.'

'He did? How?'

At that moment, Johnny Fontane began to sing. 'Let's listen to the song,' Michael tried to change the subject.

'Please Michael,' Kay said impatiently, reaching across the table and squeezing his hand. 'Tell me.'

'Well, Johnny is my father's godson. When Johnny was beginning to become popular, he had a problem with his boss, a band-leader. Johnny wanted to leave the band, but this man wouldn't let him. So Johnny asked my father to help. My father went to see the band-leader and offered him \$10,000 to let Johnny go. He said no. The next day my father went to see him with Luca Brasi. One hour later, the band-leader let Johnny go. For \$1,000.'

Kay looked confused. 'How did he do that?'

'My father made him an offer he couldn't refuse. Luca held a gun to his head and my father told him that if he didn't agree to let Johnny go, Luca would blow his brains out.'

At first Kay didn't say anything. She thought Michael was joking. But Michael wasn't smiling. 'That's a true story, Kay,' he said quietly. Then he saw Kay beginning to look worried, a little frightened, so he squeezed her hand and added quickly: 'That's my family, Kay. That's not me.'



I don't know what to do, Godfather. 'Johnny Fontane sat on the corner of the desk in Don Corleone's dark office and shook his head helplessly. Don Corleone was sitting in his leather chair, listening carefully to his favourite godson. He had, after all, travelled two thousand miles from California to be at his

daughter's wedding. 'My voice is weak,' Johnny went on. 'I can't sing as well as I used to. There's a part in a film that I want. It would be perfect for me. If I had this part, I'd be a top star again. But the boss of the film company, Jack Woltz, won't give me the part. Can you help me?'

'Go and rest,' Don Corleone said. His voice was soft, but there was a rough quality to it that made everybody listen. It was a voice impossible to argue with. Something to do with the way he spoke without moving his mouth. 'In a month, this man will give you what you want.'

'Too late,' Johnny looked at his godfather unhappily. 'They start filming in a week.'

Don Corleone stood up and put a fatherly arm around Johnny's shoulder. 'I'm going to make this man an offer he can't refuse,' he said, leading Johnny towards the door. 'Now, go and enjoy yourself. He kissed Johnny on the cheek, shut the door and turned to Tom Hagen, who had heard everything.

'What are we going to do with your daughter's new husband?' Tom asked. 'Shall we give him anything important to do?'

'No,' Don Corleone replied. 'Give him something small. A betting shop, maybe. But never discuss the family business with him.'

'Virgil Sollozzo called,' Tom went on. 'He wants to meet you next week.'

'We'll discuss that after you get back from California.'

Tom looked surprised. 'Why am I going to California?'

I want you to help Johnny. You're going to talk to this Jack Woltz. I want you to go tonight. And now, if there's no other business, I'd like to go to my daughter's wedding.'

With these words, Don Corleone left Tom alone in the office, went outside, took his daughter by the hand and danced with her to the slow, Sicilian music.



Don Corleone took his daughter by the hand and danced with her to the slow, Sicilian music.

Chapter 2 The Greatest Racehorse in the World

Tom Hagen arrived in Hollywood early the next morning. From the airport he went straight to his hotel, showered, shaved, and had breakfast. Then he drove to the film company for his meeting with Jack Woltz at ten o'clock.

Jack Woltz was giving a birthday party for one of his young girl stars in front of a lot of reporters. Tom waited patiently. Finally, Woltz walked up to him. He was a tall man with thick silver hair, expensive clothes and a hard, unfriendly face.

'OK, start talking,' he said to Tom. 'I'm a busy man.'

I was sent by a friend of Johnny Fontane, 'Tom said. 'He would be very grateful to you if you could do him a small favour.'

I'm listening, 'Woltz said, busily signing papers.

'Give Johnny the part in that new war film you're going to make.'

Woltz stopped writing and laughed. He took Tom by the arm, as if he was an old friend, and led him towards the door. 'And if I gave Johnny Fontane this part, what favour would your friend do for me?' he said.

'You have some problems with your workers,' Tom said. 'My friend could make these problems disappear. You also have a top star who's taking drugs

But Jack Woltz had heard enough. 'Listen to me!' he shouted angrily. 'You tell your boss, whoever he is, that Johnny Fontane will never get that film'. You don't frighten me!'

I'm a lawyer, 'Tom said calmly. 'I'm not trying to frighten you.'

I know all the lawyers in New York,' said Jack Woltz, 'but I've never heard of you. Who are you?'

I work for one special family, 'Tom said. 'Now, you have my number. I'll wait for your call.' He shook Woltz's hand and added, before leaving: 'By the way, I like your films very much.'

Tom was sure that, when Woltz realized who he worked for, he would call. And he was right. Late that afternoon, a car picked

him up from the hotel and drove him out of the city to Jack Woltz's home in the country.

Woltz's house looked like something from a film. It was a huge pink-walled house surrounded by beautiful gardens, lakes and fields full of horses. Woltz welcomed Tom like an old friend, gave him a drink and showed him around.

'Why didn't you tell me you worked for Corleone, Tom?' he asked.

'I don't like to use his name unless it's really necessary.'

Woltz took Tom by the arm. 'Come with me, Tom,' he said. 'I want to show you something really beautiful.'

Woltz led Tom into a white building which was guarded by private detectives. Inside the building there were rows of horses. Woltz led Tom straight towards a beautiful horse with smooth black skin and a large, white, diamond-shaped mark between its eyes.

'You have an eye for beauty, don't you, Tom?' Woltz said proudly. 'This is Khartoum, the greatest racehorse in the world. I bought him in England for \$600,000.' He looked lovingly into the animal's enormous dark eyes for a long time, talking to it softly like a lover, forgetting about Tom. Tom coughed with embarrassment. Woltz touched the horse one last time on the neck, then said to Tom: 'Let's go and have dinner.'

'Corleone is Johnny's godfather,' Tom began to explain at dinner. Although there were only two people at the table, the food was served by three waiters. 'To Italians, that's very important.'

I respect that,' Woltz said. 'Just tell him he can ask me anything he likes. But not this. This is one favour I can't give him.'

'He never asks a second favour when the first one is refused.' Tom gave Woltz a warning look. 'Understood?'

This made Woltz angry. 'No,' he said, pointing his finger across the table at Tom. 'You don't understand. Johnny Fontane never

gets that film. The part is perfect for him. It'd make him a big star. But I'm not going to give it to him. And do you know why?' He stood up and began to move slowly around the table towards Tom. 'I had a beautiful young actress. She was going to be a star. I spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on her, singing lessons, acting lessons, dancing lessons. Then Johnny Fontane came along and took her away from me. I lost her. He made me look stupid, and that's something I can never forgive. That's why I'll make sure that Johnny Fontane never works in films. Now, you get out of here! And if your boss wants to frighten me, tell him I'm no band-leader!'

Tom waited until Woltz had finished. 'Thank you for the dinner,' he said quietly. 'Could your car take me to the airport now, please? Mr. Corleone is a man who likes to hear bad news immediately.'

Then without another word he left the table, took his hat from one of the servants and walked quickly out of the room.



Jack Woltz was sleeping alone in his enormous bed. For some reason, this morning he woke up earlier than usual. The room was getting light. Everything was quiet. But he could feel that there was something wrong. He turned over and saw that there were wet red marks on his bedclothes. His night-shirt felt sticky, and there was a horrible smell in the room. He lifted the bedclothes off his body and looked down. His nightshirt was covered in blood. Without thinking, he sat up and pulled the bedclothes off his bed completely. The shock of what he saw nearly killed him. At first he couldn't breathe. He felt sick. Then, a moment later, he was filled with an animal fear. He opened his mouth and screamed.

For there, at the bottom of his bed, was the beautiful black head of his favourite racehorse, Khartoum. Somebody had cut it

off during the night and put it in his bed while he was sleeping. It was stuck to the bed in a thick cake of blood, its mouth open, its huge round eyes staring at him like pieces of half-eaten fruit.

Jack Woltz's screams woke all the servants. Six hours later, Johnny Fontane received a phone call telling him that he had the part that he wanted in the film.

Chapter 3 Virgil Sollozzo

Virgil Sollozzo was excellent at killing people with a knife. He was a strongly-built man with dark eyes and a wide, cruel mouth, but today he was trying to be polite and friendly. He had an important favour to ask, which was why he had asked for this meeting with Don Corleone.

'Don Corleone,' he smiled warmly. 'I need money to help me start a new business in drugs,' he said. 'If you give me one million dollars, I can promise you between three and four million dollars in your first year. After that, you'll get even more.'

Don Corleone said nothing at first. He seemed to be thinking. He looked around the room, at Sonny and Tom Hagen, and at Clemenza and Tessio, his two oldest friends. They were all watching him quietly with serious faces, waiting to hear his reply. Finally, he turned back to Sollozzo. 'Why do you come to me?' he asked in his usual rough whisper.

'I need a man who has important friends,' Sollozzo said, lowering his eyes respectfully towards the Don.

'And what about the Tattaglia family? How much will they get?'

Sollozzo looked surprised. He didn't know that Don Corleone had discovered that he worked with the Tattaglias. He nodded his congratulations in the direction of Tom Hagen, who had obviously done his homework, and turned back to Don

Corleone. 'Don't worry,' he said. 'I'll pay the Tattaglias from my own money.'

Don Corleone didn't reply. He stood up slowly, took a bottle from the table and politely offered Sollozzo some more wine. Sollozzo watched with a worried look as the Don sat down next to him.

Finally, Don Corleone spoke. 'I said that I would see you because I heard you were a serious man. You are a man I should respect. But I must refuse your offer. I will give you my reasons. It's true I have a lot of important friends in Government and the Law. But they wouldn't be my friends if they knew my business was drugs. Drugs is a dirty business.'

'But nobody will know,' Sollozzo said. 'I promise you the Tattaglias will make sure that nobody finds out.'

Don Corleone opened his mouth to reply but, before he could speak, Sonny said: 'Are you saying that the Tattaglias can promise that they'll ...?'

He didn't finish his question. He saw a cold look in his father's eye and stopped talking at once. Don Corleone turned back to Sollozzo. 'I apologize for my children,' he said. 'They talk when they should listen. But Signor Sollozzo, my no is final. I congratulate you on your new business, and I wish you luck. Your business is different from mine. We mustn't be enemies. Thank you.'

Don Corleone got to his feet, and everybody stood up too. Sollozzo was angry, but he hid his feelings from the others. He politely shook Don Corleone's hand and walked out of the room.

Don Corleone waited for Tessio, Clemenza and Tom to leave the room, but called Sonny back. He stared up into his son's eyes for a moment, then said in an angry whisper: 'What's wrong with you? Has your brain gone soft?'

Sonny looked away, unable to look his father in the eye.

'I know you think this drugs business is a good idea. I know you think it's the business of the future, and I'm just a stupid old-fashioned man. But never tell anyone outside the family what you're thinking again.'

Sonny looked surprised at first, and then a little angry. But he was too afraid of his father to argue with him. He lowered his head respectfully, turned round and left the room.

Don Corleone immediately called Tom Hagen: 'Tell Luca Brasi to come in,' he said.

Brasi sat down alone in the office with Don Corleone. He had the terrible, frightening face of a killer, an enormous body that looked as if it was made of rock. But, as he looked at Don Corleone, his dark, unintelligent eyes were soft with respect. He loved his Godfather. And Don Corleone, knowing this, trusted Luca Brasi more than anyone he knew.

'I'm worried about Sollozzo,' Don Corleone said. 'I want you to find out what he's hiding, what he's got under his fingernails. Do you understand? Go to the Tattaglias. Pretend that you're not happy with our family and that you want to work for them. Then tell me what you find out.'

Luca Brasi asked no questions. He nodded once, lifted his mountainous body to its feet, and walked out of the room, proud to do whatever his Godfather asked him to do.



For the next few weeks, Luca Brasi went regularly to the night-dubs controlled by the Tattaglia family. He made contact with Bruno Tattaglia, the youngest son and manager of the night-dubs. He told Bruno he was dissatisfied with the Corleone family. For a couple of months, nothing happened. Then one night, a few days before Christmas, Bruno told Luca he had a friend who wanted a private meeting with him. Who is he?' Luca wanted to know.

'Just a friend,' said Bruno. 'He wants to offer you something. Can you meet him here, after the club closes? Four o'clock tomorrow morning?'

Luca went back to his room and got ready. He thought for a moment about calling the Godfather to tell him about the meeting, but decided not to. Don Corleone never talked over the phone. As well as this, his job was completely secret. Not even Sonny or Tom Hagen knew what the Godfather had asked him to do. So he took out a gun, hid it under his jacket, lay on the bed and waited.

Luca arrived at the night-club just before four in the morning. The doorman had gone, but the door was open. Inside, the club was dark and empty, except for one man standing behind the bar. It was Bruno Tattaglia. Luca walked across to the bar and sat down. Bruno offered him a drink, but Luca shook his head. Moments later, a second man in a dark coat and grey hat moved out of the shadows and stood next to Bruno behind the bar.

'Do you know who I am?' he said in Italian, his face in shadow.

'I know you,' Luca replied. 'You're Sollozzo.'

'We need a man like you,' said Sollozzo. 'Strong and dangerous. I understand you're not happy with the Corleone family. Do you want to join me?'

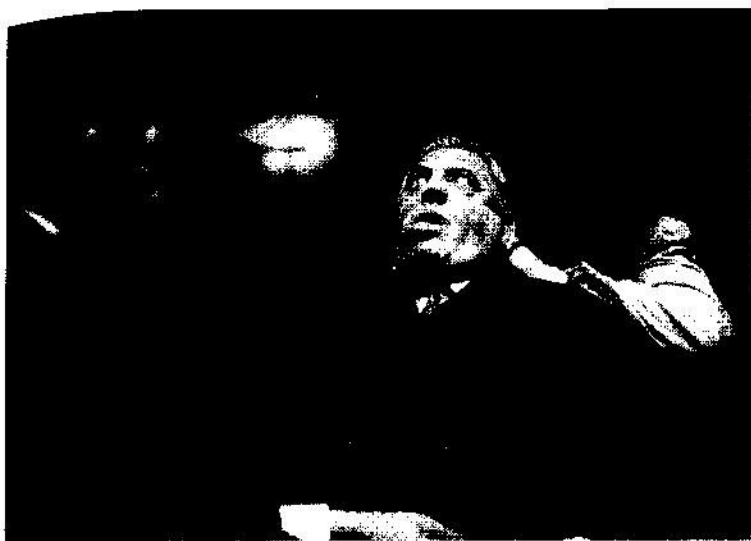
'If the money's good.'

'\$50,000 to start with.'

Luca nodded slowly, pretending to think.

Sollozzo held out his hand. 'Do you agree?'

Luca looked at Sollozzo's hand but he didn't take it. Instead he took out a cigarette and put it in his mouth. Bruno moved forward with a lighter. Luca rested his hands on the bar, bent forward and lit his cigarette. Bruno put the lighter in his pocket, smiled at Luca and gently touched the back of Luca's hand. Then suddenly, without warning, he took Luca's arm with his other



A third man stepped out of the shadows behind him and threw a thin cord around Luca's thick neck. The cord pulled tight.

hand and held it tight. At the same moment, Sollozzo pulled out a knife and pushed it straight through Luca's hand. Before Luca could move, a third man stepped out of the shadows behind him and threw a thin cord around his thick neck. The cord pulled tight. He tried to fight, but he couldn't get his hands up to the cord around his neck. They had planned everything perfectly. While Sollozzo and Bruno Tattaglia held one hand down, his other hand was pinned to the bar with the knife. The cord pulled tighter and tighter, cutting into his throat until he finally stopped moving and fell slowly to the floor. But Sollozzo, Tattaglia and the other man did not let him go for several more minutes. They needed to be sure that Luca Brasi, the most dangerous man in the Corleone family, was dead.

Later on the same day, Tom Hagen came out of a large shop carrying Christmas presents for his children. Sollozzo was standing in the street, waiting for him.

'Happy Christmas, Tom,' Sollozzo smiled.

Tom nodded nervously.

'I'm glad I met you,' Sollozzo continued in a friendly voice. 'I want to talk to you.'

'I haven't got time,' Tom said, and began to walk away. But two men stepped forward and stopped him.

'Make time, *Consigliori*,' Sollozzo said, suddenly less friendly. 'Get in the car.' Then, noticing the look of fear in Tom's eyes, added quickly: 'Don't be frightened. If I wanted to kill you, you'd be dead already. Trust me.'

Without a word, Tom got into the car.



Later that same afternoon, not knowing that Sollozzo had killed Luca Brasi and had kidnapped Tom Hagen, Don Corleone finished his work in the offices of his fruit company. He put on his coat and said to Fredo, who was reading a newspaper: 'Tell Paulie Gatto to bring the car. I want to go home.'

'I'll have to get it myself,' Fredo replied. 'Gatto's sick today.'

Don Corleone looked annoyed. 'That's the third time this month. Maybe we'd better get another man for the job.'

Fredo jumped to his feet. 'No, I'll get the car. It's OK,' he said. 'Paulie's a good boy. If he says he's sick, he's sick.'

Don Corleone waited inside the door until he saw Fredo park the car just outside. There was snow in the air and it was getting dark. He stepped on to the pavement and was about to get into the car when he decided to buy some fruit from the market on the other side of the street. He crossed the road and showed the fruit-seller the exact oranges and grapes that he wanted.

He was so busy choosing fruit that he didn't see two men in black hats and long black coats turn the corner and walk quickly along the street

towards him. He took the bag of fruit and paid the fruit-seller. Then he heard the sound of the two men running wards him. Without thinking, he dropped the bag of fruit and surprisingly quickly for a man of his age, back across the street towards his car.

He had just reached the car when the two men pulled guns out of their coats and began to fire. Don Corleone was hit several times in the back. Fredo, on hearing the sound of guns, jumped out of the car; he was shaking so much with fear that he dropped his gun before he could use it. But his appearance was enough. On seeing him, the two men stopped shooting and ran away.

Fredo looked down and saw his father's body lying in a pool of blood. Unable to believe what had happened, he sat down in the road next to his father, pulled off his hat and began to cry like a baby.

Chapter 4 Sicilian Message

Late that night, Michael and Kay were coming out of a theatre. Although they were staying in New York, Michael had told his family that he was in New Hampshire, over a hundred miles away. 'If I told my family we were in New York, we would have to see them right away,' he told Kay. 'Then we wouldn't be able to be alone together.'

The night was freezing, and Michael and Kay held each other closely as they walked slowly along the crowded pavement.

'What do you want for Christmas?' he asked Kay.

Kay laughed and kissed his frozen cheek. 'Just you,' she said.

They walked a little further, then suddenly Kay stopped. 'Mike,' she said, looking behind her, her face white with shock.

'What's the matter?' said Mike, confused.

She took his hand and led him back to a newspaper shop they had just passed. She pointed to a newspaper. Michael picked it up. 'VITO CORLEONE SHOT FIVE TIMES' he read on the front page. Opening it, he saw a photograph of his father. 'KILLERS SHOOT UNDERWORLD BOSS'.

Without looking at Kay, he ran across the street to a public telephone and rang Sonny.

'Sonny?' he said. 'It's Michael. Is he all right?'

'We don't know yet, but he's hit bad, Mikey,' his brother said. 'Where have you been? We've been worried.'

Michael suddenly felt guilty about lying to his family about New Hampshire. 'I called. Didn't Tom tell you?'

'No. But come home, Mikey. You should be with Mama. We need you.'



Michael picked up the newspaper. 'VITO CORLEONE SHOT FIVE TIMES' he read on the front page.